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Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region

Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region

Report of the Secretary-General

Contents

		Page
I.	Introduction	2
II.	Replies received from Governments	3
	Netherlands	3
	Panama	3
	Poland	4
	Ukraine	5

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I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 63/86, commended the Mediterranean countries for their efforts in meeting common challenges through coordinated overall responses, based on a spirit of multilateral partnership, towards the general objective of turning the Mediterranean basin into an area of dialogue, exchanges and cooperation, guaranteeing peace, stability and prosperity, encouraged them to strengthen such efforts through, inter alia, a lasting multilateral and action-oriented cooperative dialogue among States of the region, and recognized the role of the United Nations in promoting regional and international peace and security.

2. The General Assembly also recognized that the elimination of the economic and social disparities in levels of development and other obstacles as well as respect and greater understanding among cultures in the Mediterranean area would contribute to enhancing peace, security and cooperation among Mediterranean countries through the existing forums.

3. The General Assembly called upon all States of the Mediterranean region that had not yet done so to adhere to all the multilaterally negotiated legal instruments related to the field of disarmament and non-proliferation, thus creating the necessary conditions for strengthening peace and cooperation in the region. The Assembly encouraged all States of the region to favour the necessary conditions for strengthening the confidence-building measures among them by promoting genuine openness and transparency on all military matters, by participating, inter alia, in the United Nations system for the standardized reporting of military expenditures and by providing accurate data and information to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms.

4. The General Assembly also encouraged the Mediterranean countries to strengthen further their cooperation in combating terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, including the possible resort by terrorists to weapons of mass destruction, taking into account the relevant resolutions of the United Nations, and in combating international crime and illicit arms transfers and illicit drug production, consumption and trafficking, which pose a serious threat to peace, security and stability in the region and therefore to the improvement of the current political, economic and social situation and which jeopardize friendly relations among States, hinder the development of international cooperation and result in the destruction of human rights, fundamental freedoms and the democratic basis of pluralistic society.

5. Furthermore, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on means to strengthen security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region. The present report is submitted in compliance with that request and on the basis of information received from Member States.

6. In this connection, a note verbale dated 23 February 2009 was sent to all Member States requesting their views on the subject. The replies received are contained in section II below. Additional replies will be issued as addenda to the present report.

II. Replies received from Governments

Netherlands

[Original: English]
[15 May 2009]

1. At its sixty-third session, the General Assembly adopted resolution 63/86, entitled "Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region".

2. The following is in response to the request of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs for the view of the Permanent Mission's Government on the issues covered by the resolution for consideration by the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session.

3. The Netherlands, like other European Union member States, believes that European security is closely linked to security and stability in the Mediterranean. The Netherlands therefore endorses the continuation of the political and security dialogue with the region, in order to create a common area of peace and stability underpinned by sustainable development, rule of law, democracy and human rights.

4. The Netherlands considers the Union for the Mediterranean key in this process and an important instrument to enhance economic, social, cultural and environmental cooperation with the Mediterranean countries. The Netherlands supports the aim of the Union to intensify the process of dialogue and consultation through tangible, regional and trans-regional projects.

5. Security and stability in the Mediterranean region also contributes to the alleviation of tensions beyond the region. Together with the European Union, the Netherlands calls on all States of the Mediterranean region that have not yet done so, to accede to all multilaterally negotiated, legally binding instruments related to disarmament and non-proliferation, in order to strengthen peace and security.

Panama

[Original: Spanish]
[15 May 2009]

1. Panama supports any bilateral or multilateral initiative which could better guarantee against threats to international peace and security and therefore help to strengthen peace and cooperation in the region.

2. Accordingly, Panama considers it important to foster the conditions necessary to strengthen measures to build confidence between States.

3. Panama encourages the countries of the Mediterranean to continue cooperating to counter terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, international crime, illicit trafficking in arms and the production, consumption and smuggling of drugs, all of which harm the public's quality of life and seriously threaten peace and stability in the region. To that end, attention should be paid to compliance with the relevant United Nations resolutions and with multilateral agreements on various subjects.

4. Panama firmly believes that taking these steps, proposed by the United Nations, will build confidence and decrease perceptions of threat in the region. Consequently, there would be grounds to expect not only better communication between countries traditionally seen as opponents, but also significant progress in areas underlying the conflict itself.

Poland

[Original: English]
[12 June 2009]

1. Poland, as an active European Union (EU) member, jointly shapes its foreign policy towards the Mediterranean region. Bilateral EU relations with countries of the region are being carried out within the European Neighbourhood Policy framework. Implementation of Policy actions (as identified in the EU plans of action of the Policy) has a positive impact on the comprehensive reforms in those countries, which consequently strengthens security and stability in the region. EU studies show that, regardless of the current financial crisis and the Gaza conflict, this positive tendency is growing. Poland has been active in establishing guidelines for strengthening EU relations with two of the most advanced countries in that sphere: Morocco and Israel.

2. In addition to bilateral ties, Poland also supports the multilateral cooperation within the Union for the Mediterranean Initiative framework, which is a new and ambitious continuation of the Barcelona Process. This new initiative strengthens institutional ties with the countries of the region and increases regional security especially in the fields of maritime security, energy supplies and migration security. Current regional developments and the fact that the activities within the Union for the Mediterranean were suspended in January 2009 confirm, yet again, that until the Arab-Israeli conflict and tensions between the Turkish and Cypriot populations are resolved, the Initiative will not be able to develop properly.

3. The European Union, as a member of the Quartet, has played a leading role in international efforts aimed at securing peace in the Middle East. Moreover, EU has been cooperating with the Palestinian Authority and Israel, as well as with the League of Arab States and other partners in the region. Poland played an active role in shaping the EU Council conclusions that consistently call on both the Israeli and Palestinian sides to take all necessary means that will lead to the creation of an independent, democratic and sustainable Palestinian State, which would exist side by side with Israel in peace and security.

4. In 2008, Poland contributed to the stabilization of the Middle East by participating in United Nations missions in Lebanon (the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon) and in the Golan Heights (the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force).

Ukraine

[Original: Russian]
[29 April 2009]

Resolution 63/86: Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region

1. Ukraine is involved in Operation Active Endeavour, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) counter-terrorism effort in the Mediterranean, having signed an agreement to that effect in the form of an exchange of letters. The agreement was concluded on 21 April 2005 at a meeting of the NATO-Ukraine Commission at the level of ministers for foreign affairs, held in Vilnius, Lithuania. The agreement was brought into force by decree No. 71/2006 of the President of Ukraine, of 26 January 2006.

2. The Operation seeks to counter terrorism by preventing the illegal shipment by sea of weapons and ammunition and by preventing the use of civilian vessels for unlawful transportation of persons or for other unlawful activity.